

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 431

TM 003 645

AUTHOR Hendel, Darwin D.
TITLE Using Transcript Information in Evaluating a
Non-Traditional Degree Program.
PUB DATE [73]
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association (59th,
Chicago, Illinois, April 1974)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; College Students; *Evaluation
Techniques; Models; *Program Evaluation; *Special
Degree Programs; Student Records

ABSTRACT

The nontraditional degree program at the University of Minnesota is located in a traditional setting, but the participants are exempted from many of the standard graduation criteria such as fulfillment of language and distribution requirements. Students' academic success is outlined along with the results of the study (evaluated by using registration data obtained from transcripts) (1) to describe and compare the courses and academic records for students accepted into the program with students who were not accepted into the program, and (2) to expand the data based literature concerning the evaluation of nontraditional degree programs. (Author/BB)

Using transcript information in
evaluating a non-traditional degree program

Darwin D. Hendel
Measurement Services Center
University of Minnesota

Abstract

The present report describes a method for describing students' academic success in non-traditional degree programs by using registration data obtained from transcripts. Students admitted into the newly established Bachelor of Elected Studies Program in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota were compared with non-admitted students for the first two quarters after the program began. Results indicated that although the four most popular departments were identical for the two groups, the next six were different. A comparison of grade point averages for the two groups of students did not yield any meaningful, consistent differences.

Author: Darwin D. Hendel

Mailing Address: 9 Clarence Avenue SE
Measurement Services Center
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Title of Paper: Using transcript information in evaluating a non-traditional degree program

Institution: Darwin D. Hendel
Measurement Services Center
University of Minnesota

The growth in the number of non-traditional institutions and non-traditional degree programs within established institutions has been both rapid and extensive. For example, a survey by Givens (1972) described 34 new programs in colleges throughout the United States.

Rapidly following the development of non-traditional educational experiences, concern for the evaluation of such programs has mushroomed. Recent publications by Dressel (1971), Houle (1973) and the Commission on Non-Traditional Study (1973) have discussed some of the issues concerning the development and evaluation of non-traditional educational experiences.

One of the many types of programs included under the aegis of non-traditional education is a general degree program, which although located in a traditional setting, is free from many of the graduation criteria such as the fulfillment of language and distribution requirements. The Bachelor of General Studies at the University of Michigan and the Bachelor of Elected Studies (BES) at the University of Minnesota are examples of this type of program.

Although previous reports such as those by Morris (1970) and Comstock (1972) have compared students in these general degree programs with students in regular degree programs on a number of pre-program ability, attitude, and demographic variables, little data exist to describe and compare the academic performance and the types of courses students take after the program has begun.

The objectives of the present report are as follows: 1) to describe a method for describing and comparing students' academic success in non-traditional degree programs by using registration data obtained from transcripts; 2) to describe and compare the courses and academic records for students accepted into the BES program at the University of Minnesota with the students who were not accepted into the program (heretofore referred to as Non-BES students); and 3) to expand the data-based literature concerning the evaluation of non-traditional degree programs.

METHOD

When the BES program began in Winter Quarter of 1972, approximately 700 University of Minnesota students had previously applied for entrance into the program. Since the BES degree was considered experimental, the annual limit for the number of entering students had been set at 500. Hence, 500 of the 780 students were randomly selected for admission into the program; the remaining students constitute the Non-BES comparison group used in the present report.

Copies of transcripts for the BES and Non-BES students were obtained from the Office of Admissions and Records. At the time the transcripts were obtained (November, 1972), post-BES data were available on the transcripts for two quarters (Winter Quarter 72 and Fall Quarter 72).

The transcript data were coded as completely as possible--including department code, course number code, credit code, course type and grade code.

Two computer programs were written to obtain the data for the present report. The first computer program categorized a students' courses according to departmental codes and produced a list of frequencies and percentages of courses taken in various departments in the College of Liberal Arts during Winter and Spring Quarters 1972. The second computer program categorized a students' courses according to the four distribution categories used in the College of Liberal Arts (Communication, Language and Symbolic Systems; Physical and Biological Sciences; Man and Society; and Artistic Expression) and a fifth category which included all courses not included in one of the four distribution categories. The second program yielded individual grade point averages (GPA's) for courses taken in each of the five categories; the GPA's for the BES and Non-BES students were compared by using a two-sample t-test for independent samples.

RESULTS

The BES students registered for a total of 2,944 courses during Winter and Spring Quarters combined. The registration percentages for the ten most popular departments are Sociology (10.3%), History (7.9%), English (5.2%), Psychology (4.7%), Political Science (4.1%), Humanities (3.7%), Physical Education (3.7%), Social Science (3.6%), Philosophy (3.5%), and Anthropology (3.4%).

The Non-BES students registered for a total of 1,058 courses during Winter and Spring Quarters combined. The registration percentages for the ten most popular departments are Sociology (10.1%), History (7.1%), Psychology (6.1%), English (4.7%), Spanish (4.6%), Studio Art (4.1%), Economics (3.2%), Speech-Communication (3.2%), Child Psychology (2.9%) and Music (2.9%).

The grade point average means and standard deviations for the five categories of courses are as follows: 1) Communication, Language and Symbolic Systems-- Winter, 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}$ =2.89, SD=.82; Non-BES, $\bar{X}$ =2.83, SD=.89) and Spring 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}$ =2.81, SD=.83; Non-BES, $\bar{X}$ =2.54, SD=1.15); 2) Physical and Biological

Sciences--Winter 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.89$, $SD=.82$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=2.82$, $SD=.60$) and Spring 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.81$, $SD=.83$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=2.36$, $SD=1.03$); 3) Man and Society--Winter 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.93$, $SD=.78$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=2.95$, $SD=.73$) and Winter 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.87$, $SD=.79$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=2.94$, $SD=.74$); 4) Artistic Expression--Winter 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.89$, $SD=.73$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=3.12$, $SD=.72$) and Spring 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.98$, $SD=.87$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=3.02$, $SD=.66$); and 5) Other Courses--Winter 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=3.11$, $SD=.80$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=2.98$, $SD=.92$) and Spring 1972 (BES, $\bar{X}=2.98$, $SD=.81$; Non-BES, $\bar{X}=3.19$, $SD=.78$).

A comparison of the departmental registrations for the two groups of students suggests that during the first two quarters after the BES degree was initiated, the BES students were not greatly different from the group of Non-BES students. The four departments with the largest percentages were identical for the two groups of students.

Although differences were found in the grade point averages between BES and Non-BES students for some of the five categories of courses, the differences were small, and with few exceptions, the differences were not statistically significant.

Educational Impact of the Study

The educational importance of this study occurs at several levels. First, the results of this report provide important information to the University of Minnesota concerning the progress of students in the new degree program. Second, the methodology used for examining transcripts in terms of the number of departmental and category registrations provides a model for the investigation of the types of programs students develop in non-traditional degree programs. Third, the results of the study provide the beginning of a set of comprehensive evaluation data regarding an area which, because of the relative newness of non-traditional degree programs, suffers from a paucity of data concerning academic success and program planning of students in such programs.

REFERENCES

- Commission on Non-Traditional Study. Diversity by design. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973.
- Comstock, J.A. The Bachelor of Elected Studies Degree Program. Mimeographed. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Measurement Services Center, University of Minnesota, 1972.
- Dressel, P.L. (Ed.) The new colleges: Toward an appraisal. Iowa City: The American College Testing Program, 1971.
- Givens, P.R. A summary of programs providing for student-designed plans of academic study. Mimeographed. Ithaca, New York: Ithaca College, 1972.
- Houle, C.O. The external degree. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973.
- Morris, C.G. Bachelor of General Studies: Initial Report. Mimeographed. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, 1970.